Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph [0055] with the following amended paragraph:

[0055]   When non-puncturing patterns with period $7\hat{N}/2$ ($\hat{N}$ = 1, 2, 3...) are used, degradation in performance results. These non-puncturing patterns ~~periods~~ will be employed whenever the average non-puncturing period of P1 or P2 bits is within ±1 or ±½ of $7\hat{N}/2$ for even and odd $\hat{N}$ respectively.